

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Burrowing mammals can cause damage to highways resulting in increased maintenance, rehabilitation costs and decreased level of service. Typical damage includes undermining of structural fill which can allow water to infiltrate under paved surfaces causing premature failure and shoulder erosion creating potentially unsafe driving conditions.

The magnitude of this maintenance issue in Montana has not yet been fully determined but where the problem does occur it poses complex maintenance, operational, environmental and ecological challenges. The public's expectation of environmental stewardship in transportation projects requires that mitigation of roadbed damage by burrowing mammals is context-sensitive, humane and cost effective.

A shift from reactive maintenance to strategic preventative planning and implementation is essential to effectively reduce damage by burrowing mammals while minimizing unintended consequences.

A proactive methodology is needed so that highway designers and maintenance personnel can continue to provide a safe and efficient highway system.